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## ÆSTHETICAL STUDY OF ART.

THE study of Art, as a branch of education, is only beginning to be understood; nor has a sufficient time passed, since it has come to be seriously considered, for a just recognition of its importance to be established. It cannot be forced upon attention, but it will grow up and spread, if a spirit of earnestness can be associated with the subject; if the enjoyment which it affords be referred to a nobler object than to tickle the fancy or please the taste; if we can get rid of vague words which express nothing, and substitute ideas which are the utterance of truth; if the mutual necessity of feeling and knowledge can be recognized, and their proper limits be ascertained; if the power of determining opinion be transferred from the fluctuating and unreflecting decisions of the multitude to the arbitration of self-conviction; above all, if men will acquire boldness to feel for themselves, and honesty enough to express what, and what only, they do feel.

Nevertheless, a great change has unquestionably been coming on for some time, and Art is viewed in a very different light from what it was a century ago. We understand something more of its nature, inasmuch as we begin to subject it to analysis, and to investigate not only the powers of its various branches, but their limits—to discover that the chief merits and dignity of each lie precisely in those points which are unattainable by the rest, in their characteristic qualities. We learn at the same time to distinguish this kind of criticism from that view of Art which is strictly technical; and the result will be, that in proportion as these differences are pointed out and understood, the feelings will be quickened and the judgment strengthened—the connoisseur and the artist will learn correctly the proper ground which each ought to occupy. This object is, in other words, a knowledge of the true nature and value of criticism—the power of discriminating and of combining, in their various applications and uses—the knowledge of the mental and manual duties, as distinguished and united—the ability to appreciate intention and expression, or the inward and outward conception and manifestation of idea: for the end of Art is the production of truth under the complex varieties of form.

The study of Art must be preceded, as well as accompanied, by reflection and conviction, if its pursuit is to lead the student any further than a superficial acquaintance with detached fragments—if he would study the edifice, and not merely play with the bricks of which it

is composed. Is his purpose to pick up and retail the counterfeits that pass for opinion, or to learn to feel and to think for himself? Let him first know and reverence Art as an interpreter of religion, speaking in a language exclusively her own, reaching the soul in those ways alone where to all other teachers is “knowledge at this entrance quite shut out.” How profound this study is, man only learns by advancing; but, be the progress long or short, if conducted on system and principle, the knowledge attained is valuable and real.

We must preface our subject with a few remarks on the use of the word Truth, as upon this basis rests the whole structure and appreciation of Art. Truth is either absolute, abstract—considered without reference to the mind’s perception—or concrete, realized, if we may thus express the form which the mind gives it. Abstract truth is simply another word for perfection, which, equally applicable to all attributes, is a relative term, and conveys no independent idea. But truth realized by the mind, is that which, to the individual is true; and this consciousness is elicited by the feelings and judgment, and determines opinion. The one has an objective relation to man, and is the standard by which he judges; the other is purely subjective, and has a strict and single reference to his self-conviction. Thus, for instance, there is an absolute truth in the composition, say, of one of Raffaele’s cartoons, or of coloring in Titian’s “Christ crowned with thorns;” but if we were to tell this to a clown, it would convey to him no idea, and therefore would be no truth to the man: the truth nevertheless exists, and if his mind can be informed, his feeling called forth, and his judgment instructed, this will reveal itself to him unconsciously, and become individualized, *his own*; and this is precisely and profoundly the whole end of Art—it makes what is true, true to the mind. Our subject is intimately connected with this individual character of truth. The principle, applied to the study of Art, leads to the conclusion that, as feeling, the basis of all appreciation, is single and unimpartable, it must spring from the root, and cannot be ingrafted. Opinions are the unbidden assent of the understanding to truth—the “*mens sibi conscia veri*.” From these inferences we are led to respect opinion and feeling in their free and enlarged forms, instead of attaching a false value to that fleeting shadow of opinion to which the word *public* is applied, and which represents more generally ignorance than knowledge. To unfold a consciousness of truth is to develop a spiritual existence. However widely the circle of thought and speculation may be extended, the

mind is necessarily led back into itself for the realization of truth; for man is infinitely small, and God is infinitely great; nevertheless God reveals himself to man through his individual consciousness. Thus, then, with humble seriousness we open the page of Truth under the revelation of Art; and, by the recognition of individual opinion, the mind is sent forth to seek truth under all its forms, eager to correct or to confirm its views, and to profit by the minds of others, as offering suggestive materials for the exercise of its own faculties.

The education of an artist is the attainment of a knowledge of what the truth in Art really is, and the just means of expressing this: we hold, therefore, that such a doctrine as Sir J. Reynolds lays down in the following words is fundamentally erroneous and pernicious. "Besides real, there is also apparent truth, or opinion, or prejudice. With regard to real truth, when it is known, the taste which conforms to it is, and must be, uniform. With regard to the second sort of truth, which may be called truth on sufferance, or truth by courtesy, it is not fixed, but variable: however, whilst these opinions or prejudices, on which it is founded, continue, they operate as truth; and the art, whose office it is to please the mind as well as instruct it, *must direct itself according to opinion, or it will not attain its end.*" This exactly depends upon what the *end* really is: if it is simply to please the public taste (which represents this "truth on sufferance"), to follow where it ought to lead, knowing the right and practising the wrong, debasing and dealing treacherously with Art and abusing her powers, then Sir Joshua may be right to hold up such a rule to a student. But if the end which we would place, singly and solely, before an artist is the correct one (for as these objects are opposed they cannot coexist), if the truth, as it exists in its abstract simplicity, is that which is the aim and end of Art and artist, then is Reynolds entirely wrong. Both rules have been adopted and acted upon, and we may therefore test our opinion by the results of practice; the great masters of Italy worked on an opposite principle; the artists (in every branch of art) at the present day\* follow precisely the rule given by Reynolds;—we see the fruits of this.

The subject of Art must be viewed under three aspects:—first, that of *feeling*, which is the impression produced on the mind by the beautiful,† and is proportioned

\* We exclude Germany from this remark: Art has at least a widely *different* existence and value in that country and this.

† The term *beauty*, in an enlarged and correct view, is not restricted to any attribute, or any one form of expression (a common and vague definition which has led to endless disputes), but denotes that degree of perfection, that approach to the *truth*, which every effort in Art is directed to realize. The degree in which this is accomplished, is the degree in which beauty is expressed; and the term is thus equally applicable to the most ugly and horrific expression, as the most graceful and pleasing. Opie well observes, that

to the susceptibility of the person, his perceptive and imaginative powers. The second aspect is the *intellectual*, which explains the connection between feeling and art—the cause that excites feeling: this cause, or principle, is the proper object of investigation, and to ascertain this is alike important, in every profound inquiry, to artist and connoisseur. Third, the practical or *technical* aspect, which is purely scientific, and regards the proper application of the discovered intellectual principle to the necessities of each particular art; it includes all that regulates the industry and mechanical skill, and, though subordinate to the other two, is essentially necessary in conjunction with them both, to form the practical artist. These three relations of Art must not only be distinguished from each other, but also from all that relates merely to its *history*, which, though connected by a most interesting link with the results, has no relation to the means, that is, to the science of Art. Thus, too, Art, regarded as a science, is one and unchangeable, whilst the application of it to different purposes, varying with the temperament of the times or of the individual artist, is infinitely diversified. These fluctuations and diversities—the rise, progress, and decline of Art—belong to history, with which the immutable character of the science has only an accidental connection. The business of intellectual criticism is to investigate and establish the ultimate principles by which Art affects the mind, and to test all works by this principle in its manifold applications when discovered; and the connection between the results of Art and the guiding principle, if carefully deduced, will convince the man of feeling that there *is* a ground for his admiration, however exalted, and show the man of practical study that there *is* a guide for his labors, however mechanical.

The first consideration which Art presents is the ground of agreement, the common end of its various branches; the next, very important one, the points of difference. Mr. Eastlake, in his admirable preface to Kugler's work, observes:

The end of the arts, in whatever terms defined, may be assumed to be more or less common to all creations of taste, in which some external attraction, some element of beauty, is the vehicle of mental pleasure or moral interest. On the other hand, in considering the form, or means, of any one of the arts, as distinguished from the rest, a more essential difference is apparent: the value and dignity of each art, considered in this light, is not in proportion to the qualities it may have in common with its rivals, but to those qualities which are unattainable by them. Hence, whenever the characteristic excellence

"The ideal, if it mean anything, means the selection and assemblage of all that is most powerful and best calculated to produce the wished-for effect, and relates to the management of a whole composition, and to the just delineation of a bad moral character as much as to that of the most beautiful and amiable. Thus, Iago, Macbeth, and Shylock, are as beautifully drawn, and as perfect in a dramatic point of view, perhaps even more so, than Othello, Hamlet, Imogen, or Ophelia."

of a given art has been displayed in its strength, such results have been ultimately preferred even to works of higher intellectual pretensions, which may have been deficient in the effective employment of the form in which they are expressed.

This is the sound basis of criticism laid down by Lessing. "The critic of Art," says he, "ought to keep in view, not only the capabilities, but the proper objects of Art. Not all that Art can accomplish, ought she to attempt. It is from this cause alone, and because we have lost sight of these principles, that Art among us is become more extensive and difficult, and less effective and perfect."\* In the scale of criticism the technical and the poetical are opposites, which meet exactly at the furthest point of separation. Art works by means, poetry is the result of their just employment—in fact, the harmony of means: technical criticism refers to means, poetical to results. Yet these opposites are the complement of each other, in every work which affects the mind by the influences of form, color, or tone. Without that suggestive element, painting sinks into mere representation.

The germ of Art lies not in poetic diction, but in that poetical element which is the mainspring of feeling—the point at which all the branches of Art meet and diverge. Poetic language and painting are, in one view, opposites; the suggestive powers belong to the former, the formal to the imitative arts. Poetry so operates on the feelings as to cause the mind to create images—painting presents these, and the powers of the two must be distinguished, because their appeals are of different natures—the one suggests, the other depicts. Mr. Eastlake notes this distinction in the following excellent remarks:

In the present history we have to consider examples of Painting alone; but it is always to be taken for granted, that pictures of acknowledged excellence, of whatever school, owe their reputation to the emphatic display of some qualities that are proper to the Art. These merits are, nevertheless, often attempted to be conveyed in words, and the mode in which language endeavors to give an equivalent for the impressions produced by a picture is at once an illustration of the above principles. The progress of time, motion, speech, the comparison with things not present—all impossible in the silent, quiescent, and immutable art—are resorted to without scruple in describing pictures, yet the description does not therefore strike us as untrue. It will immediately be seen that the same liberty is in many cases allowable and necessary when representation competes with description. The eye has its own poetry; and as the mute language of nature in its *simultaneous* effect (the indispensable condition of harmony) produces impressions which words restricted to mere *succession* can but imperfectly embody, so the finest qualities of the formative arts are precisely those which language cannot adequately convey. These truths being once felt, it will appear that a servile attention to the letter of description, as opposed to its translatable spirit, accuracy of historic details, exactness of costume, etc., are not essential in themselves, but are valuable only in proportion as

they assist the demands of the art, or produce an effect on the imagination. This may sufficiently explain why an inattention to these points, on the part of great painters (and poets, as compared with mere historians), has interfered so little with their reputation. In this instance the powers of painting are opposed to those of language generally; on the same principle, they would be distinguished in many respects from those of poetry, in like manner, if we suppose a comparison with sculpture, or any imitative art, the strength of painting will still consist in the distinctive attributes which are thus forced into notice. Of these attributes, some may be more prominent in one school, some in another; but they are all valued because they are characteristic—because the results are unattainable in the same perfection by any other means. The principle here dwelt on with regard to painting is equally applicable to all the fine arts; each art is raised by raising its characteristic qualities; each lays a stress on those means of expression in which its rivals are deficient, in order to compensate those in which its rivals surpass it. The principle extends even to the rivalry of the formative arts generally with nature. The absence of sound and progressive action is supplied by a more significant, mute, and momentary *appearance*. The power of selection, the attempt to give the large impression in which the idea of beauty resides, and which corresponds with the image which the memory retains, the emphasis laid on the permanent rather than on the accidental qualities of the visible world, are all prerogatives by means of which a feeble imitation successfully competes even with its archetype. As this selection and generalization are the qualities in which imitation, as opposed to nature, is strong, so the approach to literal rivalry is, as usual, in danger of betraying comparative weakness.—*Preface*, pp. xii.-xv.

But the contrast between painting and language refers strictly to the technical aspect of the former: the characteristic of this art is to depict, which, if it stops here, is essentially prosaic; whereas, on the contrary, the formative arts are eminently poetic in their capabilities; and this apparent contradiction has to be explained. An object simply depicted or presented to the eye is like a bare fact; it conveys nothing but a statement—of itself it excites no feeling. Nevertheless, the same fact conveyed in another form instantly changes its character, and from the effect upon our feelings we recognize the change from prose to poetry: it is the *expression* which makes all the difference. There is no poetry in a block of marble, any more than in a string of words, but there is eminently poetry in the Niobe or the Laocoön, as there is the conception of Death and Satan in the *Paradise Lost*; it is essentially the difference between matter and spirit, and this is marked by expression, which is the eliciting the idea of the beautiful, and is effected by Art. The *science* of Art, therefore, as offering a medium of expression to poetry in one form which is singularly its own, instead of sinking in character, acquires importance from its real character being understood. For the poetic treatment of a subject by art, we may instance the "Retreat of Attila," by Raffaele, representing the fierce Hun arrested by the threats and persuasions of the Pope: there was room for a display

\* Mrs. Jameson's Handbook to the Public Galleries, vol. i. p. xlix.

of skill in the composition ; but design, unassisted by poetry, would have rendered the interest of the picture merely technical, and the event have been placed before us only as a page of prose history. Raffaello seized the opportunity for employing the poetry of his art ; the threatening vision arrests the warrior with awe, but he alone sees it : the spectators attribute the effect to the eloquence of the pontiff. The event becomes in the highest degree dignified by this treatment ; the mind follows the artist's intention, the suggestions he has presented in the appearance of the saints : imitative art could only have placed two figures there—poetry tells why they are introduced : we read the cause in the effect, but all in the language of poetry. The whole event becomes transformed into the expression of a grand religious idea ; and the closer analysis we apply, the more apparently does the technical composition of the picture subserve this unity of thought, which was prominent in the artist's mind. The solemn tranquillity in the papal group, which Winkelman here remarks, has a wonderful force ; the calm dignity of conscious inspiration meets and confronts the boisterous tumult of the Huns ; on the one side is arrayed the divine, on the other earthly power ; moral and physical are brought into immediate contrast, and the whole action of the picture centres in the great moral triumph achieved. So far, then, the picture is a poem : its technical merits form a subject for other criticism. We make these remarks to distinguish the two.

The technical employment of design and coloring likewise is often an important aid in the development of a poetical idea. "In design," says Goethe, "the soul gives utterance to some portion of her inmost being, and the highest mysteries of creation are precisely those which, as far as relates to their fundamental plan, rest on design and modelling : this is the language in which she reveals them." We may instance the unconscious effect on the mind of the composition of the "Raising of Lazarus." The great central idea is the power of Heaven shown in raising the dead body, and its action is conveyed to the spectator's mind by the Saviour's outstretched arm, instantly suggesting the words—"Lazarus, come forth !" This action, which proclaims and accomplishes the miracle, immediately leads to the object of it, thus bringing into juxtaposition and contrast the cause and the effect, and still more the highest and the lowest objects which the mind can conceive—the power of God, and the annihilation of the grave. In the "Transfiguration," again, every line in the design conducts the eye unconsciously upward, where the great religious idea of the picture is centred. Of this great work Goethe admirably observes : "It is difficult to conceive how the unity of such a conception could ever have been impugned. How can the upper and lower portions of the picture be separated ? United, they form a perfect whole ; below, the sorrowing and

necessitous—above, the powerful and beneficent ; each has reference to the other. Raffaello is distinguished for correctness of thought, and could a man so divinely gifted have falsely conceived, falsely executed such a subject ? No ; like nature he is always right, and often most profoundly so when we are the least able to comprehend him."

Coloring likewise has great and peculiar poetical capabilities. In such pictures as Titian's "Peter Martyr," and (although widely different) in many of Rembrandt's, we see and *feel* a sentiment in the coloring which is essentially poetic. How much of character is marked by this in the portraits of Titian, in the "luminous power and subdued internal glow" of Giorgione's heads, in the *chiaro-oscuro* which pervades Correggio's works, and gives them a poetic character chiefly from this cause ! "The elevated style of Titian's color," observes Mr. Eastlake, "which may be said to be on a level with the generalized forms of the antique, perhaps harmonizes best with subjects of beauty ; but when united with the simplicity of composition and sedateness of expression, for which he is remarkable, it sometimes confers a character of grandeur even on religious subjects." The science of coloring, in short, springs from conceptions strictly poetic, and is worked out in a manner strictly technical. This is acknowledged by Mr. Rio in the following passage, and we value his testimony the more because he is an enlightened enthusiast of the spiritual and religious school of Art :

No sooner do we quit the sphere of idealism in art, if the human imagination descend only one degree, it must stop in the sphere of *naturalism*, using that word in its highest acceptance. Nature has her living and mysterious harmonies, which reveal themselves to the soul of the artist and the poet, and direct them instinctively in the choice of form and color ; thence combinations infinitely varied, which, moving in a circle of conceptions much less sublime than those which the Umbrian school cherished, yet occupy the first place in the history of art, when we arrive at the period of its decline. The charm of a harmonious coloring is not so superficial or material as is commonly thought ; it is connected with conditions of individual organization, which the most persevering imitation of the most beautiful models in this department cannot supply. . . . It is true that in this respect, the Florentine school never approached the Venetian and Lombard school ; but we must distinguish between the vigor of local tone, and the harmony which results from gradations skillfully shaded and from *chiaro-oscuro* ; this last constitutes what we may call the poetry of coloring, whilst the other is, so to speak, the materialism or rather the sensualism.—*Rio*, p. 395.

For the terms "idealism" and "naturalism," we should rather substitute those of poetry and science—the spiritual and the technical ; and in following the history of Art, the rise of the one with the decline of the other of these elements forms a most interesting subject of investigation. The latter portion of the above extract suggests, moreover, a distinction to which we at-

tach no inconsiderable weight; we mean, the difference between the sense of colors, or that feeling of the harmony produced by what we may term chromatic chords, and the sentiment of coloring, to which Mr. Rio aptly gives the epithet of poetic. These are both scientific in their study and application; but the effect is poetic, if the means are technical.

Such are some of the high views of high art, with which legitimate union of poetry and painting we must contrast their opposite. There is a fashion among our *illustrative* artists to turn poetry-painters—a kind of pictorial dress-makers. Milton is a favorite victim among these gentlemen of the brush, whose choice of pictorial subjects seems to be regulated by a peculiar tendency to violate all artistic propriety: they take Milton's description of Death, Sin, or Satan, from the "Paradise Lost," as they would that of a ball-dress from the "Belle Assemblée," and the merit of the artist consists in his ingenuity to torture into shape the pure creations of the mind—

that shape had none  
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb.

Sometimes the picture-maker seems not to take the trouble to read the theme of his illustration; that exquisite picture of the shipwreck in "Lycidas," for instance, is exactly and deliberately reversed:

The air was calm, and on the level brine  
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.  
It was that fatal and perfidious bark  
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine!

The magnificent expression, "rigged with curses dark," puzzled the artist as much as it would have done a ship-builder. But Milton doubtless committed an oversight in wrecking a ship in a *calm*: the artist, taking his trade license, corrects the mistake, and depicts a raging storm, in which the ship goes down in a natural way.\* Such a scene is perfectly pictorial, only that, as an illustration of Milton, it might as well have represented the eruption of a volcano. Satan—the greatest conception that ever poet had—is impersonated by a brawny, grim fellow, with a staff in his hand. L'Allegra is figured by a blousy nymph, looking affectedly merry and silly. These *things* are worth noticing only as indications of a prevalent taste, which is a mixture of childish curiosity and genuine ignorance. In this age of universal supply and demand, the rules of the political economist often save trouble, and the general multiplication of any class of works indexes as surely the fashion in matters of taste as in the colors of a lady's dress. When shall we

get rid of a taste for extravagant fooleries? The rage for *illustration* is pernicious to the last degree if its just limits are lost sight of; and this consideration, unfortunately, enters as little into the head of the artist who executes the shop order, as of the publisher who gives it.

It is a remarkable fact, that in Milton's "Epistolæ Familiares"—many of them written from Italy—we find no mention of, still less criticism upon, any works of art. The libraries at Florence and Rome furnished a rich feast of learning, but for any remark upon buildings, statues, paintings, we seek in vain. Can this have been the result of accident? Could Milton, the loftiest artist in his own walk of poetry, have seen and been untouched by the Niobe, the Laocoön, the Moses, or the Transfiguration? Perhaps more so than most ordinary spectators. We believe it was because Milton was truly a spiritualized poet, in the highest sense of the word, that he was not, perhaps, an appreciator of art in its formative expression: his soul labored with the immensity of its conceptions, but rejected form: images crowd upon us as we read; we realize them to ourselves only as we have the power, but we realize only a portion. As character is the mark of greatness in an artist, indicating singleness, unity, and concentration of thought, so the very cause and element of Milton's greatness was exclusive in its appreciation as in its expression—exclusive, that is, in the high and true sense of the word—in the sense in which Art demands exclusiveness. Milton's mind would have opened to plastic art in greater power and fullness than the minds of most men, had it been cast in the mould: it had abundantly the capacity, but not the temper. The poet was *occupied* with his art, nor was ever the real loftiness of beauty more impressively felt than by Milton: he was conscious, too, of his vocation and of his powers: "De cætero quidem," he exclaims, "quid de me statuerit Deus, nescio, illud certe: δεινόν μοι ἔρωτα, εἰπέρ τῷ ἄλλῳ, τοῦ καλοῦ ἐνέσταξε. Nec tanto Ceres labore, ut in fabulis est, liberam fertur quæsisisse filiam, quanto ego hanc τοῦ καλοῦ ἰδέαν, veluti pulcherrimam quandam imaginem, per omnes rerum formas et facies (πολλὰ γὰρ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων,) dies noctesque indagare soleo, et quasi certis quibusdam vestigiis ducentem sector."

The remarks on Art in Addison's Letters from Italy give us a landmark of the position of criticism a century ago. Addison was not a mere book-read scholar, but a critic of refined feeling, and nice discriminating powers: his essay on Milton infinitely surpasses the stolen rescript of Johnson. In his "Remarks on Italy," he thus writes from Florence:—"Tis the famous gallery of the Old Palace, where are perhaps the noblest collection of curiosities to be met with in any part of the whole world. The gallery itself is made in the shape of an L. . . . It is adorned with admirable pieces of sculpture, as well modern as ancient; of the last sort

\* A vile burlesque of one of the grandest portions of the "Paradise Lost" may be found by the curious in "The *imaginative* Illustrations of J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R.A., to the poetical works of John Milton," and in Westall's gross caricatures. Boydell's Shakespeare would afford matter for a volume of amusing criticism.

I shall mention those that are rarest, either for the person they represent or the beauty of the 'sculpture.' Then follows a catalogue of emperors' names, a few pages of antiquarian lore, on such questions as whether "the vestals, after having received the tonsure, ever suffered their hair to come again;" and he has only room left to remark, that he "saw in the same gallery the famous figure of the Wild Boar, the Gladiator, the Narcissus, the Cupid and Psyche, the Flora, etc. Among the antique figures there is a fine one of Morpheus in *touchstone*." At Bologna, "which is esteemed the third town in Italy for pictures," he says, "I saw in it three *rarities* of different kinds, which pleased me more than any other *shows* of the place: the first was an authentic silver medal of the younger Brutus; the second was a picture of Raphael's in St. Giovanni in Monte: it is extremely well preserved, and represents St. Cecelia with an instrument of music in her hands: there is something wonderfully divine in the airs of this picture. I cannot forbear mentioning, for my third curiosity, a new staircase," etc. At Venice he remarks of the palaces, that "their furniture is not commonly very rich, if we except the pictures, which are here in greater plenty than in any other place in Europe, from the hands of the best masters of the Lombard school—as Titian, Paul Veronese, and Tintoret: the rooms are generally hung with *gilt leather*," etc. These extracts are significant specimens of the criticism applied to Art at the period when they were written. We are first carried into a curiosity-shop—a kind of superior raree-show—and are then hurried along through rooms of antiquities and classical lore into an upholsterer's shop. The sentiment for Art does not suffer, only because it does not exist.

Burke's Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful illustrates the state of criticism at a later period; and as one of the few attempts to treat philosophically "the logic of Taste," we mention it here. *Taste* has been, we may say, up to the present time, the general term applied to that nicest sense which has baffled the investigation of our critics, and is exercised on the appreciation of Art. Although a vague term, we quarrel not with words if they convey some idea; and when Burke uses the expression "logic of taste," we value in it the recognition of systematic investigation applied to feeling. The manner in which the subject presented itself to so philosophic a mind well illustrates the novelty of the inquiry: in the attempt to treat tangibly of attributes, and to define the causes of the indefinite, to give to airy nothing a substance and a shape, he necessarily fails. Truths sparkle in every page—not the ore to be extracted from the dross, but gems *buried* in it; he betrays glimpses of many profound and comprehensive ideas, but detached and unpursued to their results, composing like a worker in mosaic instead of an architect. Take, at hazard, the following passage:

It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination. If I make a drawing of a palace, or a temple, or a landscape, I present a very clear idea of those objects; but then (allowing for the effect of imitation, which is something) my picture can at most affect only as the palace, temple, or landscape would have affected in the reality. On the other hand, the most lively and spirited verbal description I can give, raises a very obscure and imperfect *idea* of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger *emotion* by the description than I could do by the best painting. The proper manner of conveying the affections of the mind from one to another is by *words*: there is a great insufficiency in all other methods of communication; and so far is a clearness of imagery from being absolutely necessary to an influence upon the passions, that they may be considerably operated upon without presenting any image at all, by certain sounds adapted to that purpose; of which we have a sufficient proof in the acknowledged and powerful effects of instrumental music. In reality, a great clearness helps but little toward affecting the passions, as it is in some sort an enemy to all enthusiasms whatsoever.

Now these words are remarkable for containing a great truth, isolated and mixed with error. Burke here describes the fundamental characteristic of poetry, and its distinction from formative expression; but instead of serving as the basis of his Essay, the passage is slipped in as a subsidiary chapter to remarks on the physical nature of terror, and the effects of obscurity on the mind. If he intended to say that poetry is in its nature suggestive, he was right; but when he defines poetry by *words*, as "the only sufficient manner of conveying the affections of the mind," he shows that notion is limited to one form of its expression, and betrays a narrow view of Art. We should infer that he knew no more of the real poetry of Art, than of the limits of poetry in diction: he forgets that a subject may be made most tangibly clear in a verbal description, and most obscurely poetical in a painting, and thus exhibits partially a great truth, but erroneous because it is partial. His definitions of abstract ideas are, for the most part, insufficient and unsatisfactory: beauty is restricted to an attribute; a thing is beautiful because it is soft and round and small—and his whole reasoning exhibits it merely as the pleasing quality. "Like a land-surveyor" (to use the words of an admirable writer, applied to Strabo), "he seems more troubled about the length of his chain than the soil of his field." He denies that the idea of beauty belongs to proportion, and argues this from the variety of proportions in the productions of nature: he looks with the rule-and-measure eye of a carpenter, taking a fixed standing-point at which to view all objects, and forgetting that the distance must vary with their size—that we do not look through a fixed glass, but measure objects by a sliding-scale. We cannot better contrast Burke's language than with the following passage from Vasari:

"Perche il disegno," says Vasari, "padre delle tre arti nos-



tre, architettura, scultura e pittura, procedendo dell' intelletto, cava di molte cose un giudizio universale, simile a una forma, ovvero *idea* di tutte le cose della natura, la quale è singolarissima nelle sue misure, di qui è che non solo nei corpi umani e degli animali, ma nelle piante ancora, e nelle fabbriche, e sculture e pitture cognosce la proporzione, che hà il tutto con le parti, e che hanno le parti fra loro, e con tutto insieme; e perchè da questa cognitione nasca un certo concetto e giudizio, che si forma nella mente quella tal cosa, che poi espressa con le mani si chiama disegno—si può conchiudere che esso disegno altro non sia che una apparente espressione e dichiarazione del concetto, che si ha nell' animo, e di quello che altri si è nella mente immaginato e fabbricato nell' *idea*.\*

It is not our purpose to trace the progress of criticism, further than to give a specimen of its character at a comparatively distant period. When we come to the times of Reynolds, Fuseli, Hazlitt, and recent critics, the views of Art appear changed and ennobled; its æsthetic form is partially revealed, although the science of æsthetics is yet unacknowledged. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Hazlitt tended to the same end by different roads; Reynolds taught the dignity of his art under its scientific character—distinguishing, although not clearly defining, its limits†—aware of the importance of this investigation, but not following it out, because the object of his Discourses was first directed to form the painter, and to impress upon the student the necessity of “considering all rules with a reference to the mechanical practice of his own particular art.” Hazlitt, on the contrary, treated Art under its poetical forms, and showed the art of poetry to be no other than the poetry of Art. These opposite lines of criticism meet and assimilate on the common ground of philosophical analysis, and their

\* Della Pittura.

† The want of this accurate demarcation of principles led Reynolds into many errors of criticism, and occasioned a misconstruction, we believe, of many of his real opinions, from the ambiguity of their expression. A strong instance of this is the general rule he lays down that “the great style in Art, and the most perfect imitation of Nature, consists in *avoiding the details and peculiarities of particular objects*.” To this it has been justly objected that the very reverse is the truth. “This sweeping principle,” say the writers of the article on *Art* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “he applies almost indiscriminately to portrait, history, and landscape; and he appears to have been led to the conclusion itself, from supposing the imitation of particulars to be inconsistent with general rule and effect. It appears to us that the highest perfection of the art depends, not on separating, but on uniting general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy.” Nevertheless, we believe that Reynolds meant other than he really said, and that the error lies in the words he has wrongly used to convey his sentiment: he had probably in his thoughts the wish to impress upon the student the poetic capabilities of his art, and to distinguish these from the technical details—urging this broad and great principle, that those effects which Nature produces on the mind are to be produced also by Art; but that this imitation, if restricted to a mere copying of details and peculiarities, obliterates the general and broad expression which is intimately blended with the poetical elements of Art, and forms an important and comprehensive unity.

mutual importance shows their intimate relation. No one has done so much to sound the depth of these mysterious relations between mind and Art as Hegel, who has reduced them to a philosophical system, and, we may say, created a science by analyzing its phenomena, and tracing them to their causes. But with these brief remarks we must conclude this part of our subject.

Until a comparatively recent period, the province of criticism was, in this country, held to belong exclusively to the artist: he delivered the oracle, and decided what was true and what false, what was to be believed and what rejected; while the profane vulgar were happy to receive his lessons in ignorance and with credulous indifference: this was sufficient for those who required materials for small-talk, rather than food for reflection. Yet even in this error we have a partial truth; the error lies in the want of discriminating between the science of the means and the knowledge of the results: and when this notion first came to be questioned, and men began to think that the possession of feeling, which is common to all, implied the intention of its exercise—that, although the science of the means might properly be restricted to those who could professionally pursue it, the study of the results of Art was by no means necessarily or rightly included in the restriction: a new field of criticism was opened, but a new class of critics was not formed. This implied the need of education, and the feelings had to be trained to discriminate, not alone between what is beautiful and false, but the reasons that determine truth and error. To teach a man to feel may seem absurd; to enable a man to make the full and just use of his feelings, sounds less startling, but is the same thing in other words.

Let it not be imagined that, in treating of Art, we are speaking only of Academy pictures. The oft-repeated assertion, that the present age is unfavorable to Art, unproductive of patronage, conveys a sad assurance that the real character of Art is too much a thing apart from its pursuit at the present day, and that the willing ignorance of fashion and selfishness go hand in hand. Inasfar as poetry and trade, poetry and science are opposites in nature—in as far as the mind recognizes and tolerates no interference in its motives and prerogatives from things of outward and worldly shape, but follows freely truth, the life of its existence, high as its powers can rise, acquiring strength to rise only from conscious freedom from control—in as far as Art (which emanates from, and is an utterance of, the soul's most divine and proper self) no share in or sympathy with the rewards of man. Did Raffaele, when the divine image of the “Transfiguration” first floated before his mind, weigh, before he pencilled it, the worth of his conception in the balance against lucre? Did Michael Angelo, when he prayed to the Pope that he might devote his last years to the unpaid service of religion and the service of Art—did Fra Angelico, when he knelt in prayer every time



he sat down to paint, filled with a religious awe and recognizing a religious character in his art, ask themselves the money-value of the powers God had given them? How, then, can we assimilate such feelings with the views of men who complain that they cannot paint because their pictures are not patronized, not bought, when the stimulus is from without, instead of from within? If, as we believe, the offices and end of Art are properly and peculiarly religious, there can be no lower motives than such as correspond to its character which ought to animate the artist. In a word, we say emphatically, that wheresoever and whensoever the assertion is admitted, that Art (speaking of it always in its highest sense) can tolerate connection, or recognize a relation, with patronage or any outward stimulus, then, there, and insofar is the term misused, and degraded into an alliance with its very opposite: Art degenerates into a trade, no matter what the grade upon the scale.\* "Was thut die Kunst? die Kunst geht nach Brod!" The words which Vasari, with wrongful injustice, applied to Perugino, may too justly be used for the class of artists we refer to: "Aveva ogni sua speranza nei beni della fortuna, e per denari avrebbe fatto ogni mal contratto."

The first step in the study of Art is to learn its real value, a lesson which professional artists may not be the first to acquire; it matters little, indeed, if they are the last. If we live in times, or in a country, where the real worth of feeling is not understood, where opinion is but the glittering and shifting mirror that reflects whatever gleam plays upon it, still there is nothing to cause regret or despair: it is not written in the book of providence: another task is assigned to this age, the fulfillment of a different purpose. Be it so: the development of a poetic sense has not, like physical science, a principle of progression within itself, for in this point art and science stand contrasted. Science advances by rule, every step set is one onward, its materials are facts, and scientific truth is capable of mathematical determination; it is a constant pursuit of the laws of nature, and their application to the practical uses of life. In Art, on the contrary, man takes nature as he sees her; his work is not to investigate her operations in order to employ her action, but to produce that which shall act upon the feelings as nature acts, but by a different process: the one is a process of discovery, the other of creation. When Titian established his wonderful principles of coloring, he employed no action of nature; if he had, nature would have painted, not Titian. How are those marvellous gradations and harmonies of light and shadow produced by nature? The answer might open a new page in natural science, but not ena-

ble a man to paint; for in this wonderful power of substitutive imitation, Art speaks to our feelings, not through nature, but through itself. It is ever the *art* which gives to works of art their value and their truth. Thus, too, it is true that *summa ars celare artem*, as the greatest difficulty is to produce the effect in the greatest force, by removing from sight the cause. Titian's portraits kindle us with delight; but remove the canvas, and discover behind it the living man—the charm is at once broken; the play of shade and color upon his features has ceased to fix our notice, and the source of our delight in looking at the portrait is removed, simply because we are no longer regarding a work of art but one of nature.

Here, then, is the point at which the real character of technical art is first recognized, and we learn from it this truth, that as nature operates by fixed laws, so art works by fixed principles: if this be admitted, the secret may be explained why such a marvellous difference exists between the science of coloring in Titian's school and that of modern artists: the eye is no longer allowed to guide by caprice the pencil of the artist; he works, not alone by his own single power of visual imitation, but upon sure principles, which are acknowledged to produce certain results, and those results true ones: he labors at his art, to produce the truth, but upon the principles which alone can lead to its expression. The style, the fancy, the treatment of subjects, the temper and the powers of artists, vary; but if they work upon a common and acknowledged system, they produce the same results in a greater or less degree: they constitute a school, and in no other way can a school of art be formed, or ever was formed. Where, we ask, do we find any school of colorists in the present day? Vandyck went to Italy to study the science of his art, where he knew it was understood and practised: he went, not to sketch banditti or Roman peasant-girls, but to learn how the Venetian masters worked, and we trace the results of his study. The principles which that school adopted are lost, and, reverting to the works of Titian and his contemporaries, we can only judge of their effects.\* Will artists be content to see and admire

\* We know the common answer to this, that the artist must work to live as well as live to work: with this our remarks have nothing to do; we cannot sacrifice Art to the individual, nor are we writing an essay on the means of subsistence.

\* Reynolds, who knew more, perhaps of these principles than any other modern artist—whose life was in fact chiefly devoted to their study—only hints at the basis of the science; but in the following passage, which to many may convey a very simple idea, he includes, we believe, the profound truth of the whole, which, according to his penetrating view, is precisely the realization of the greatest possible variety of effect by the simplest possible means. But to effect this implies the utmost difficulty, the greatest labor, and the greatest triumph of the artist. Speaking of Titian's principles of coloring, Reynolds observes, "This manner was then new to the world, but that unshaken truth on which it is founded has fixed it as a model to all succeeding painters; and those who will examine into the artifice, will find it to consist in the power of generalizing, and in the shortness and simplicity of the means employed. Many artists, as Vasari observes, have imagined they are imitating the manner of Titian, when they leave their colors rough, and neglect the detail;

these, or investigate the causes which produced them? but here is the real difficulty to be mastered. There is a lamentable degree either of hypocrisy or laziness in those who, while they profess unlimited admiration for the Venetian colorists, contradict their profession by practising opposite principles, or rather working on no principle at all.

The pursuit of physical science is collective, and its workmen are coöperative; the development of technical science is collective, but the power of application—the artist's manipulation—is a work to be elaborated by individual study; rules may be taught, but the ability of applying them rests with the man, and is strictly individual. Not only were Raffaele's and Michael Angelo's conceptions peculiarly their own, but their power of expressing them was unimpartible. If Raffaele learned or imitated, he did so by his own power of appropriation: every idea gained from the works of another was but the development of an idea in his own mind, worked out by himself and strictly made his own. The natural course of Art is retrograde as well as progressive: a great mind opens upon truths, and sees into the vast region of Art's capabilities: centuries may elapse, and the truth gained be lost and forgotten, before another rises who again seizes and appropriates it.

All feeling for Art, the ground of its existence, lies in the poetic element, or the æsthetic sense—this alone gives the power of appreciation; it belongs alike to the artist and the connoisseur, and is the only ground they occupy in common; for as soon as a connoisseur criticises even in thought the execution of any work of art, he so far ranks himself with the executor. It is difficult to decide how far it is safe for the artist to be poet, or the connoisseur to be artist, but the difficulty decides the importance of the inquiry. The unprofessional critic occupies one vantage-ground, and his judgment may have so far a higher value than that of the artist, that, not being diverted to the details of the structure, he regards it from a distant point, and views only the whole: if nature is here unassisted by science, it is also unconstrained by its rules: ignorance of the rules of art is, in one sense, the best critic of art: "Mirabile est cum plurimum in faciendo intersit inter doctum et rudem, quàm non multum differat in judicando: omnes enim tacito quodam sensu, sine ullâ arte aut ratione, quæ sint in artibus ac rationibus recta ac prava dijudicant: neque earum rerum quendam funditus natura voluit esse expertem."\*—"A painter," says L. da Vinci, "ought not to refuse to listen to the opinion of any one; if we know that men are able to judge of the works of nature,

but, not possessing the principles on which he wrought, they have produced what he calls *goffe pitture*, absurd, foolish pictures; for such will always be the consequence of affecting dexterity without science, without selection, and without fixed principles.—*Discourse XI.*

\* Cicero, Orat. iii 51.

should we not think them more able to detect our errors?"

This kind of criticism is essentially true, even if erroneous in particulars: nature stands for acquired knowledge, and the results are forced unconsciously upon the mind, when the means are out of sight. No person, wholly ignorant of the science of music, but with an ordinary share of feeling, could listen to that sublime work, "The Crucifixion," by Spohr, without having the scene brought before his mind with a force and vividness which by turns thrill and shake his inmost soul, and stir his passions to their centre. Here is nature's test of the musician's *art*; all these effects have been elaborated, note by note and phrase by phrase; every harmony is perfected by rule and tested by scientific principles: this is true of the arts generally, in their various applications. The labor of the artist is creative—it is the evolution of truth; it converts idea into form, which is the manifestation of idea; and what is termed the ideal is only the unproduced type of the mind's conception: in the education of this lies expression, which is the soul's language:

As the end of Art is expression, the force of this is marked by character, which in its nature is distinctive: it would appear anomalous to say that the perfection of the artist's powers lies in the restriction of his field of action, and inconsistent with the views we take of the common elements of Art, that the greatest artist should be removed from the circle of those highest elements: but in marking distinctions, it is only in order to perfect a general harmony. We distinguish the poetry of art from the science of art, as two ideas, to be worked out to one grand end: the painter, as a scientific artist, is great by the concentration of his powers upon his peculiar pursuit—feeling the value and fullness of poetic treatment, but following strictly the principles of his science. Now we may observe that all truth under the revelation of Art is specific, and all specific truth a necessary portion of a greater truth. But as all truth in action is based on principles which regulate its development, and each smaller truth has to be pursued to its results, first separately and then combinedly, so an artist's attention must be restricted in the execution of that which his mind comprehends in its fullest compass. There can be only one centre to a circle, but there is system within system, and to each its centre; and every unity is but an integral of the circumference of a larger circle. All branches of Art form one circle and have one centre; each has its own circle and its own unity; and every minutest subdivision of each branch is again within itself a whole, forming extrinsically but a portion of a greater whole, according to one general law of comprehension.\* As a simple illustration take the fol-

\* We may apply the words of Sir J. Reynolds:—"I wish you to bear in mind that when I speak of an *whole*, I do not mean simply an whole as belonging to composition, but an whole with respect to

lowing: the *truth*, the *idea*, or the *unity* of design, is free and perfect, and the artist who expresses that idea in any work, and makes it true (for truth is the idea and unity of every branch of art, as of art collectively), perfects his work so far; nevertheless, he may know nothing more than the principles of design. Another may give to a design the effects of light and shade, in their complex varieties, following out the *idea* contained within this circle of art. A third may add to these effects the harmonies of color, blending and contrasting, following strictly principles which educe the idea, or unity, or truth, of colors. The three several studies, when combined, are subjected to the same principles, variously applied and variously tested, according to the requirements of each in combination with the rest; and the three ideas, or unities, are accessory to a grand, comprehensive unity, each fitting to the other, and resolved into a general harmony, the fulfillment of which is the test of the complete technical truth of the picture. But beyond, apart from, and yet intimately related to these technical studies, is that highest poetical feeling which should dominate over the whole conception and execution of the artist, harmonizing all, controlling all—that sublime spiritual unity of thought and feeling which constitutes the poetical idea of the picture.—(*Reprinted from an English Review*).

*Conclusion in the next number.*

THE most superficial observer must be struck with that simplicity without insipidity, that similarity without sameness, which appear in the productions of the Greeks. A kind of family likeness may be said to pervade the whole of their works, which, while it preserves and displays the common character of their art, at the same time admits and exemplifies every variety of form, feature, and expression, that is necessary to mark, with the most delicate discriminations, the distinctive shades of real or imaginary beings. Whatever the subject, there is nothing capricious, arbitrary, or accidental in their mode of treating it. All is the result of measured propriety, of ascertained truth, and settled principle.

The maxims of their taste seem to have obtained the consistency of a code, and to have been established by general convention; for however varied their productions, in beauty, character, and expression, they all appear to be executed in the same style: their artists seem all to have worked by the same light, and to have been guided by principles which regulated even the caprices of fancy, and conducted sensibility to science. Always seeking the perfection of every quality and characteristic of the subject which they proposed to represent, they preserved and aggrandized the general and essential forms—suppressed or diminished the particular and unimportant: they subjected the impetuosity of genius to the discipline of industry, and purified taste by reflection and philosophy.—*M. A. Shee*.

the general style of coloring—an whole with regard to the light and shade—an whole of everything which may separately become the main object of a painter.”—*Sir J. Reynolds's Discourse XI*.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DANTE AND MILTON.

BY MRS. E. VALE SMITH.

### V.

MILTON's plan of *Paradise Lost* was more simple than Dante's *Commedia*. It has few under-currents. He, like Dante, had long revolved in his mind the purpose of writing a poem which should outlive the political writings he was forced upon by the uneasy times, and which should prove something which men “would not willingly let die.” His choice long wavered upon a subject. First intending to select some hero of early British history for his principal character, and some point of time in that history before the myth-clouds of tradition had been dispersed by the critical historian, it was possibly with this idea in mind that he commenced his *History of England*, with an account of those fabulous times, which he himself tells us would be of use to poets, if not to statesmen. At one time he had nearly selected King Arthur as his hero, but, fortunately for his poetic fame, the postponement of his life-purpose to a late period, with what he felt to be the monitions of Providence directing him to a religious work, prevented his attempting a chivalrous epic; and for other subordinate reasons, the theme finally became *Paradise Lost*. Nor can we think it possible that Milton would have equalled himself had he chosen a lighter and gayer subject. He had not a trace of the knight-errant in his composition, and his ideas of woman would forever have prevented him from filling out the full measure of a true knight's devotion.

The suggestion is not without plausibility, that the desertion of his first wife suggested the title of his book. There is a passage in Book X. 873–908, wherein Adam expresses his indignation at Eve for leaving his side, and describing the act as bringing with it infinite calamity, and loss of almost every good, which could not possibly have been written without bringing his own case vividly to mind; but so far as books, and other extraneous circumstances were concerned in the selection of his theme, many might be mentioned. One of the first poems which came into his hands, when a lad, was a copy of Du Barta's work—a long and curious account of the creation, called (if we recollect right) the “*Days and Weeks*,” or some such title. It had a temporary celebrity in England, and subsequently in Germany, where it was much admired; but Dryden is said to have extinguished it utterly by this brief but severe criticism: “In my youth I was much taken with it, but I am much mistaken now, if it is not abominable fustian.” Fustian or not, Milton draws on it at sight with little scruple.

When at Rome, Milton saw, and was much impressed with, Michael Angelo's picture of the “*Creation*,” as, also, Raphael's painting on the same subject in the Vatican, together with Bandinelli's large statues of Adam and Eve: and, at Florence, the “*Fall of Lucifer*,” also attributed to Michael Angelo. This series of paintings